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STORIES OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

From residents of Greater Manchester

Produced by
People's Voice Media &
The Institute of Community Reporters

In partnership with
The Greater Manchester Network of
Community Reporters (GMNCR)



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INTRODUCTION

What is Community Reporting?



Community Reporting is a storytelling movement that was started in 2007 by People's Voice Media, and it uses digital tools such as portable and pocket technologies to support people to tell their own stories, in their own ways. Using the Internet and other dissemination channels to share these stories, we are able to connect them with the people, groups and organisations who are in a position to make positive social change.

Central to Community Reporting is the belief that people telling authentic stories about their own lived experience offers a valuable

understanding of their lives. Through creating spaces in which people can describe their own realities, Community Reporting provides opportunities in which people can:

- Find their voice
- Challenge perceptions
- Be part of a conversation of change

The Institute of Community Reporters (the ICR) was established in 2012 and is responsible for developing the Community Reporting storytelling movement across the UK, Europe and the World. It supports its Community Reporters (i.e. grassroots storytellers),



"We often hear the story of the organisation, but not the story of the individual. That's what Community Reporting provides."

Gary Copitch / CEO of People's Voice Media

Trainers (i.e. facilitators of Community Reporting programmes) and Social Licensees (i.e. local organisations who support Community Reporting in their area) to run Community Reporting activities and to maintain the values of our practice.

Our storytelling methods enable people to give a 360 degrees understanding of their world usually by talking in reference to a broad topic (i.e. work) or life event (i.e. moving home). The stories gathered are then the basis of our curation activities. This process involves a layered analysis of individual stories, accompanied by a series of packaging activities (i.e. feature articles

edited films, word clouds, reports etc.).

Once stories have been curated, we seek to mobilise the knowledge in them by connecting the packaged content with the people, groups and organisations with the power to make positive social change. This can include influencing policies, service redesign, and contributing to research findings.

In this report, stories gathered by the Greater Manchester Network of Community Reporters (GMNCR) have been curated into a series of summative reports. The findings in this report are the collective insights from 50+ stories gathered in 2017.

EXPLORING PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM



CONTEXT OF THE STORIES

The Greater Manchester Network of Community Reporters (GMNCR) supports and engages in Community Reporting activities across the conurbation. In this network, organisations such as Macc, GMYN, Gorsehill Studios, Big Life, Bolton CDP and Inspiring Communities, Together act as Social Licensees that train new Community Reporters in their geographical areas and support them to continue to capture and share their own and other people's stories about what life is like in their communities. As part of the Greater Manchester Public Service Reform (GMPSR), the GMNCR has expanded with new Community Reporter groups and Social Licensees being established in key areas in which the reforms around place-based integration (PBI) are taking place. This section contains summative reports that outline some of the key collective insights that have emerged from the many stories gathered in these areas in relation to the work of the PBI teams, and also what life is like, in general, for people living in these neighbourhoods.

LIFE IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Residents' perspectives on living in Oldham, Rochdale and Bolton



Working with groups of Community Reporters who predominantly live or work in Holts & Lees (Oldham), Lower Falinge & College Bank (Rochdale) and Halliwell & Johnson Fold (Bolton), the GMNCR has been gathering stories about what life is like in these neighbourhoods. The stories gathered explore memories of the areas, what people value about living there and what problems or issues residents face.

Access to amenities

When conversations begin about people's perceptions of where they live, people usually start by talking about

the amenities in their area.

Residents in Holts specifically felt that the area had deteriorated due to less facilities being available locally. As residents who had lived there for many years recount, the area had previously had a range of shops including a linen shop, a butchers, and a convenience store. Yet, this is now not the case. One lady who has moved off the estate to the neighbouring area of Lees talks about how when she drives back through Holts she "can see that a hell of a lot needs to be here, more so than in the Lees area... everyone should have there own, you shouldn't have to travel".

Access to such provision seems to be a key aspect that contributes to people feeling happy about where they live. Samim, for example, moved from one area of Bolton to another because of the lack of shops in her old area. As she states, where she lives now everything is available locally and "in walking distance".

"I like the fact that it is close to close to amenities whether it is transport, restaurants or pubs..."

Andrew

The residents of Lower Falinge and College Bank were generally happy with the amenities in their immediate proximity and the ones that they could access in the nearby town centre. Talking about College Bank specifically, Andrew states that, "I like the fact that it is close to amenities, whether it is transport, restaurants, pubs, or things that you need to access such as offices and the Council and so on". Andrew is happy where he lives because of this, despite it not necessarily being a "visually pleasing" area. Similarly, another resident of the high-rise flats (known locally as the Seven Sisters) on the estate – Martin – also praised the area in terms of the shops it has and how it provides convenient access and transport to the town centre.

People living in the neighbouring area of Lower Falinge also echoed this sentiment. Marie, for example, talks about the "good amenities" and highlights how the community base provides activities for children and the option to get involved in gardening.

To watch 'Living in Rochdale' click or scan here



Despite the positivity around amenities in Lower Falinge and College Bank, a resident from the area, Donald, did highlight the detrimental effect that the decline of the market in town had, had on the area. "What's Rochdale without a market?", is the question Donald poses, before going on to outline how for him the market is not just a place to go and buy or sell goods, but instead a social hub where people can "barter" with one another. Similarly, when recalling what life used to be like on the Holts estate, a group of older women described how the local pub was the hub of the community. In this role, the pub would be the place from which trips out would be arranged. In this respect, places

like markets and pubs are not just valued because of the service they provide, but also because they are spaces in which people can interact and meet as a community. In Holts, the community café, as Sue describes, is an attempt to rebuild this and contribute to “getting people together” from neighbourhood.

What people value about where they live

Moving away from the facilities offered by areas, the residents valued less tangible aspects of their neighbourhoods such as their connections with the people who live around them. Talking about this, Maria explains that she feels safe in Lower Falinge because she has been on holiday several times and “people have watched their flat”. Kedria who is originally from Ethiopia says that the area “is beautiful for me”. For Kedria, “Falinge is like home, there is a lot of people from different races, different backgrounds, different lifestyles, but we need each other”. Andy echoes this sentiment, and acknowledges how in the diverse area, “everybody gets on with everybody”.

Whilst this sense of community spirit is to an extent naturally occurring, there has been some active input into building this

from residents who live on the estate who have become more active in the area's development. Talking about his role as Chair of the Tenants and Residents Association, Andy describes how the organisation supports people on the estate through informal chats, assistance with budgeting and a homework club for children amongst other things. For Andy, the key to building the community is to let people know that there is someone there, like himself, that “can help them”.

Talking about her experience as a young mother on the Holts estate, a lady describes how “people were community spirited and knew everybody inside out”. She recalls how the mums were like aunties to each others’ children and that although she has moved off the estate, she still remembers the “good times” that she had there. Similarly, Derek talks about how the people who were on the estate when he moved there and who are still there now are “very good people”. The fact that people have bought their homes, according to



**To watch 'Life
in Holts'
click or scan
here**



Derek, is a sign that the area is a good place to live. For Derek, the issues with the estate are not the people or the community, but how it looks. As he explains, the “only complaint I have about the estate now is the state of it, and that’s not down to the people who live on it now”. Echoing this, children who live in Holts have a number of criticisms about the lack of facilities for children and how it looks. However, they do value the other children who live there and the friendships they have made.

Stigmatising areas

In a number of the stories gathered, people spoke about the 'stigma' or

'reputation' that they felt their neighbourhood had. Talking about Holts, Derek says that before he moved on the estate many years ago, he heard that it was a bad place to live. However, when he started going to the local pub and socialising, the people who lived on the estate were more positive and told him it was “good and all that”. Similarly, people living in Rochdale felt that the town had been stigmatised. Talking about this, Sue says that people should “come and live in Rochdale for yourself and experience it for yourself rather than what you read in the papers” as there are a “lot of good people live in Rochdale”. Echoing this, Andy disregards the idea batted about in regards to Lower Falinge being



a deprived area, and asks people to “ignore what you read in the papers” and come to see the area for themselves.

Stories such as Kedria’s go some way to combat these negative perceptions of areas. In her story about life in the area she describes how one of her children has achieved a lot in terms of education and has gone on to do a Masters at Oxford University. She exclaims how people are shocked when she tells them this and that her child grew up in Lower Falinge. Real stories like these help to counter-balance the effect that negative media stories and rhetoric about areas have on the psyche of the people living there. However, these stories need to be shared more both within the communities themselves and outside of them to help to change mindsets.

Tackling anti-social behaviour

Whilst community spirit was praised in both of the areas that this report focuses on, either at present or in the past, some anti-social behaviour issues were highlighted. For example, in Lower Falinge, Marie acknowledges that the kids get a bit rowdy there and one child from Holts explains how the littering makes the area look “trampy”.

Particularly in Holts, there was a general perception that the threat of anti-social behaviour was quite prominent and that crime was a real issue. For example, a child living on the estate - Mason – talks about how there are no lights on the kick pitch and therefore he and his friends feel less secure about playing out in the dark despite not detailing any specific incident or threat to them. Something as simple as providing adequate lighting could reframe this child’s perception of the area and how safe he feels in it.

Another suggestion as to how to tackle issues and perceived issues on the Holts estate came from Lena. She proposes that by making some changes to the bad bits that people identify about the area, it could help improve how people feel about living there. This could be the issues with litter or how the place looks as the children and Derek identified. Furthermore, Lena proposes that the community should be more empathetic to the people on the estate they deem to be



**To listen
to Mason's story
click or scan
here**





causing some of the anti-social behavioural issues. She suggests that people should remember that “they are people as well”, and that they may be going through challenging times in their own lives that could be contributing to how they are interacting with society. More opportunities on the estate for bringing people together could help to create and maintain this understanding.

Summary

From these people’s perceptions about where they live we can see that access to amenities and their relationships with the people they live near are things that contribute to how they feel about where they live. The places that have facilities and provision that cater for people's needs, coupled with a strong sense of

community (such as the estates in Rochdale), seemed to be viewed largely in a positive light.

Issues with these estates were acknowledged, such as kids being noisy and the area not being visually pleasing, but the negatives tended to be overlooked or played down. What this suggests is that people and communities can manage and work around issues that arise in them if there is adequate provision for the people living there. This provision should meet their needs and provide spaces for people to come together to interact.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Working with existing community assets



The place-based integration (PBI) teams are seeking to integrate the delivery of public services across specific locations. As part of this work, the teams are also working in neighbourhoods using an asset based approach to help them to sustainably develop. This is based on enhancing the existing strengths of communities and maximising their potential. Part of this way of working is using the capacities and resources of the PBI teams to add to existing community infrastructure, whether that be supporting current activities to grow, adding extra value to existing provision or making connections between people and existing support provision. The PBI teams are keen to enable communities to do things for themselves and be less reliant on service delivery.

Building on existing practice in public service

This approach to community development is not necessarily a new way of working entirely. The seeds of this approach were already being sown prior to public service reform and the creation of the PBI teams. As Shaheen describes, prior to the PBI team being established in Halliwell, Bolton she was practicing a similar methodology in her role in neighbourhood management at the UCAN centre. The Halliwell UCAN centre is run by Bolton Council and is a connecting point for different services and information for the community it serves. As part of her role, Shaheen has helped individuals in the community

to set-up their own initiatives such as an arts and crafts group. Three years later, these groups are now self-running and in a position to bring in funding to support their activities. Their sustainability, according to Shaheen is based the group’s “genuine interest and that it works for them”.

To listen to Shaheen's story click or scan here



Another one of the initiatives to emerge from the Halliwell UCAN centre is a knit and natter group. Shaheen supported the activity to get it up and running, and it is now independently run by a community organisation – Precious Gems. Shaheen and the PBI team use this as a community asset to signpost the people they are working with to. In her story Linda describes the value of this group to her when she explains, “I’ve found it very difficult being in a group and being comfortable with other people...going there has benefited me... when doing knitting I don’t have to make eye contact and I feel more comfortable when I’m talking and I’m knitting”.

"I feel more comfortable when I'm talking and I'm knitting."

Linda

For Linda, who describes herself as not a very good knitter, the activity is more about the nattering and how it enables her to feel at ease within a group of people. The sessions also benefit the wider community through, as Linda describes, the items that are knitted being given to vulnerable people such as those experiencing homelessness. As Shaheen describes, the asset based approach is not entirely new but PBI has helped her to “step it up” in terms of how she works with the neighbourhood and in terms of which partners she is getting involved in this way of working.

To listen to Linda's story click or scan here



Enhancing existing provision

This integrated way of working and the joining up of the dots between people and services is also evident in Marie’s story. As Marie explains, she’s struggling with transition from supported

accommodation to independent living – “In the past I was bullied and I was abused nearly all my life so I’m finding it really hard with confidence and assertiveness... I’m easily led”. After speaking to Andy from the Lower Falinge Tenants and Residents Association who works closely with the PBI team and their other partners, Marie has been connected with a range of



**To listen to
Marie's story
click or
scan here**



activities and support to help her to overcome this. As Marie states, she is now having support from Living Well, has engaged with the Community Reporting scheme in the neighbourhood and is involved in the homework club on the estate. In addition to supporting Marie to be more confident, these activities are also supporting her mental health. As she explains, the activities “keep her busy” as she suffers “from severe depression and anxiety and also psychosis”. What this demonstrates is that successful PBI working revolves around having good connections to local leaders such as Andy, who can refer

people to PBI teams and existing community provision.

In a similar vein the PBI team in Rochdale working in the Lower Falinge and College Bank areas are using their resources to enhance existing community provision. In her story Cath, who runs a breakfast club for homeless people, describes how the PBI team has added additional benefit to the existing community asset. For Cath the breakfast club is not just about providing people with a meal (which is of obvious value), but also about “building a relationship with everyone” based on trust so that people feel a sense of belonging. This initiative was in place prior to the PBI team’s work in the area, but what the PBI team and associated organisations such as Big Life have been able to bring to the breakfast club, as Cath describes, is practical support around housing issues that the scheme was not previously able to do. Similarly, the PBI team in Holts, Oldham is working with the



**To listen to
Cath's
story click or
scan here**



café on the estate to enhance its offer to the residents. As Sue describes, “they are getting quite involved in the café” and this has taken the form of running socials and children’s activities from the space. More so, Roc – a community development organisation – has recently designated Donna, a Community Development Worker, to the estate who is supporting this further. As Donna describes, the vision is to make the community less reliant on things being done for them - “I’d like to see regular projects come into being that are run in the community”. In relation to the children’s activities she is involved in, she is planning to up-skill parents so that they can run them themselves from the café and other spaces in the neighbourhood.

Developing the capacity of members of the community

As indicated by Donna, a valuable part of the PBI practice is developing individuals in communities to take on more active roles in supporting their own and other people’s needs. The PBI team in Johnson Fold, Bolton have supported James to move from being a user of the UCAN centre in that neighbourhood to being a volunteer at it. As James describes, he is involved in lots of different activities at the centre that support the community. Specifically he talks about The Pantry which provides food for people from the estate who are

experiencing financial difficulties. Being involved in this and other activities is clearly beneficial to James as well as he details how he is “all over the place” volunteering at different schemes and that he “enjoys it”.

At the Halliwell UCAN centre, Fida describes how redundancy led him to retrain in a new field and start a new career via some initial volunteering. Whilst at College, Fida sought a volunteer role at the Halliwell UCAN centre in order to gain work experience in 2012. Now 5 years later, Fida is a paid member of the team. As he states, “I’m in a paid job, but not in a pressurised job, I feel as if I’m giving something back to society”. Similarly, Lena and Andy (who are residents on the Holts estate in Oldham), have been supported by the PBI team to get involved in different community activities and integrate better into the neighbourhood. They are now, particularly Lena, participating in a number of community development and support schemes. Audrey, one of the PBI team members has played an active role in building up Lena’s confidence to do this. As she describes, this fits into the wider working ethos of the PBI team - “we’re not here to do to them... we are here to help and motivate you to grow”. Echoing this approach, Luci describes how adopting a truly person-centred approach means “making sure the person is fully involved” and that they are not

a passive recipient in a process that is done to them.

Building on firm foundations

The key learning point from these stories is that the work of the PBI teams is not to start from scratch, but to instead enhance and develop what already exists in communities. This could be adding an extra element to an existing provision, enabling community members to become more active in supporting others in their communities, or by bridging the connections between community members who need support and service provision. Therefore through valuing what already exists within neighbourhoods

and encouraging ownership by residents of these assets, the PBI teams are working towards more sustainable ways of developing communities from the bottom-up rather than top-down.



WORKING TOGETHER

The value of place-based integration from a worker's perspective



Whilst working with different communities in which the place-based integration (PBI) teams are situated across Greater Manchester, the GMNCR have also collected stories from the different professionals involved in them. The stories presented in this summative report provide an insight into how the reforms in working practices have impacted on the various members of the PBI teams and the work that they do in communities to support residents.

Sharing skills

Many of the PBI team members highlighted

how the multiagency approach of the PBI teams and the multidisciplinary nature of their jobs and expertise has been of real value in supporting them to develop the neighbourhoods in which they are working. The PBI teams contain members from a range of organisations and sectors, from housing to education, police to sexual health and a multitude of other areas. A key part of this multiagency approach is that the staff members are able to learn from one another and use one another's capacities to deliver a better provision for the neighbourhood they are working in and the people they work with.

Talking about this, Susanne from the Holts and Lees team explains how prior to her role on the estate she had never done much youth work, but with the support of a more experienced colleague she has been able to establish a range of successful holiday activities

"You couldn't go on a course and buy that knowledge... it's a really nice way to work."

Luci

for children in the areas, and thus extend her skillset. Similarly, Luci who works with communities in Rochdale describes how she is always "greedy to learn new things" and that working in an integrated way with multiple agencies feeds her thirst for knowledge. As she describes, she works with "some of the most knowledgeable people in their services" and she feels that "you couldn't go on a course and buy that knowledge". For Luci, sharing your expertise with others is a "really nice way to work, it feels good".



**To listen to
Luci's
story click or
scan here**



Yet the diversity of skills within the

teams is not just of benefit to the staff for their own development but also for the people they are working with. As Audrey who works in Holts and Lees explains; whilst individual members of the team that she works in may not have all the answers when working with a person with a range of complex needs, she is always sure that they "can resolve the problem with the multiagency team" and their diverse skills.

This depth of capacity allows them to take a more holistic approach to working with people and to support the whole person and their needs, not just an individual staff member's area of specialism. Echoing this, her colleague Louise says that "there will be someone on that team that has got that skill to help" and therefore they can support one another when working with people with various issues and problems. What this means for the person they are working with is that they get to see the "same consistent worker over and over again rather than referred out". Essentially, one person can help them with the combined knowledge of the team rather than the individual having to access support from different places and people.

"...someone on that team has got that skill to help."

Louise

Sharing knowledge

Phil, a colleague of both Audrey and Louise, details how in the old system in which different agencies didn't share information about individuals between one another because of the working practices and governance issues around information sharing, people would just keep getting "referred on and on". This meant that if a person had more than one issue that they needed support with, that one agency or worker would deal with one issue and then send them to another to handle the others. Through sharing information and working together, this endless referring does not happen and they are able to "find quicker resolutions" to people's problems by working together and enabling the individual to have one key point of contact in the team.

Furthermore, whereas previous "system conditions" as Phil describes, created blockages, the multiagency teams are now more effective at dealing with them. For example, if the Holts and Lees team encounter an issue in the system, they now have a protocol in place for escalating the situation to people with the authority to "move that barrier if it aids the person we are working with". This empowers the team to challenge the system where appropriate and highlight the difficulties in it. This whole process, as Louise describes, is "consent driven" and "most of the people are asking for the help and

support" as they feel they are now being listened to by professionals and are working through their issues with them at their own pace.



To listen to Louise and Phil's stories click or scan here



The Bolton PBI teams have a similar perspective on sharing information about the people who they are working with. Chris from Bolton at Home explains that when they weren't sharing information they weren't really doing a good job. However, as the different agencies are now sharing more between each other they are creating "a more effective service which will essentially save money on the public purse". This sharing of information is also of benefit to the people they work with. As Danny, a social worker, and others in the PBI suggest, information sharing reduces the number of professionals each person encounters and essentially when they speak to the first worker they can use "that opportunity to tell their story once and be able to the support they need from that". What this means is that rather

than a whole range of professionals trying to engage with an individual with complex needs or who is experiencing a moment of crisis, they can have one firm contact with one staff member who will share their needs with others in the team in order to access the right support for that individual.



To listen to an overview film from Bolton's PBI team click or scan here



Sharing resources

Essentially, as Dave from the Rochdale PBI team describes, this way of working is about “different services coming together to support people who are finding life difficult”. In his experience, this has allowed him to “get things done quite quickly” as he now has “the connections to the services” that he needs in order to help people in the Lower Falinge and College Bank neighbourhoods access the right support provision for them. For Dave, this means that less people slip through the net and he is empowered to “get things done for people” in a way that he was not able to do so as easily prior to PBI. Echoing this, community leader and Chair of the Tenants and Residents

Association, Andy, who supports Dave and the PBI team in the Lower Falinge area says that a key aspect of his role in the community is signposting. Talking about how he works with the PBI team and associated services, he states, “[i]f we can’t help them, we can signpost them to other organisations who are able to give them that help, and let them know they are not here by themselves.”

In Halliwell, Bolton, Shaheen who has worked in neighbourhood development for some years has found that the PBI approach has enabled her to get more services involved in local delivery. As she states, “[s]ome of the services that wouldn’t have thought about working with us are now more open to the idea” due to the introduction of the PBI approach. For her, this approach has provided her with an “opportunity to engage with services in a manner that actually speaks to them, that meets their needs”. Due to this the conversation with services, bringing them into working with the community in which she is based has been “easier” and “smoother”. In essence, more services are seeking to engage at a local level due to the agenda being pushed by the public service reform.

Breaking down barriers

As Shaheen's story exemplifies, the ways of working advocated by the PBI approach have been born out of existing practice that individuals working in communities had already begun. The key contribution that the place-based integration approach have brought to this, is that it supports and strengthens the relations between different agencies and this in turn enables staff members from different organisations to work together more effectively. Echoing this, Patricia a P.S.C.O from Bolton's PBI teams, feels that the new way of working "assists organisations to cut through a lot of red tape". As Luci explains, the "integrated partnership team cuts through the system" and this means that they can get quicker results. For Luci, this is key to building trust with the people they are working with. Previously, these individuals may have "spent a lot of time going through

the system" and therefore when they see a PBI worker helping them to navigate the system to get a solution quickly it restores a bit of faith in professionals. The previous barriers that existed around the sharing of skills, information and resources between teams and organisations that operated independently of one another are beginning to be dissolved, This in turn is enabling the staff members to remove barriers in the system for the people they are working with and to fully use their own and others' skills, knowledge and expertise to provide meaningful and practical support.

"...it assists organisations to cut through a lot of red tape."

Patricia



HOUSING AND WELLBEING

Supporting people to feel more connected to where they live



Lena, who is originally from Glasgow, lives in Holts with her son, Andy. Whilst living in a flat on the estate they experienced a number of issues with their housing. This summative report explores the impact of these issues on their lives and the support they received to overcome them.

Lena and Andy's stories

When Lena initially moved to Holts she was living in a flat that had damp and a noisy neighbour; both had an impact on her health. As she describes, she had a “lack of sleeping” and it was affecting

her “wellbeing”. These issues have now been resolved through herself and Andy moving into another accommodation. In her new flat she describes how “her health as improved”, as has her relationship with her Autistic son, Andy. She describes how seeing the community team regularly helped to progress the issue's resolution and now she is in a position where she would like to help others in a “similar situation”.

Andy's perspective on the issue is very similar. Talking about the old flat, Andy describes how the issues made him feel “sad” and how he didn't really explore

the area he lived in other than the street where he lived. He describes how they weren't listened to by the landlord about the issues – "We kept complaining about the issues, but nothing was getting done. We haven't been listened to". This made him feel "depressed" and he contemplated

"We kept complaining, but nothing was getting done. We haven't been listened to."

Andy

making himself homeless. However, now that Andy has moved into a home he and his Mum are more happier with, he now feels much more settled in Holts. As he states, "[n]ow I'm in a decent flat I can now walk around the estate a lot better".

What comes across strongly in both of these stories is a sense of frustration at the issue not being resolved in, from the residents' perspectives, an adequate timeframe. Andy particularly expresses how not being heard or helped ultimately had a negative impact on him. The housing issues they were experiencing quickly began to

affect their health and wellbeing, and thus contributed to other issues for them, whether it was lack of sleep or feeling isolated where they lived. However, since moving to a new space both Lena and Andy feel more connected to where they live, with Lena wanting to give back to the community and Andy feeling more happy to explore his environment.

To listen to
Andy's story click
or scan here



Positive interventions

For Lena and Andy to be able to move home and feel happier living in Holts a number of key activities were taken by members of the PBI team. Describing his experiences of working on the case, Phil from First Choice Homes says how with the initial flat the position between Lena and the landlords had become a stand-off as the housing provider was adamant that the issue of damp in the flat was because of lifestyle choices. However, through working with Lena, Phil was able to prove that this was not the case. Key to getting this repair issue sorted for Lena and Andy was Phil's role in "unblocking" the



To listen to Lena's
story click or
scan here



system and getting the system to work quicker through “challenging were appropriate”. In essence, he was able to push the repairs forward that needed to be done to help rectify the damp so that they happened much quicker than Lena and Andy were initially told.



**To listen to
Phil's
story click or
scan here**



Despite the repairs being pushed forward, Lena and Andy still moved out of the flat and into new accommodation. As Phil describes, the incident had left Lena with little confidence in the flat due to “financial losses” so she “wanted out”. The situation had impacted on Lena that much that she was threatening to “make herself homeless” if she couldn’t move out. Due to team’s duty of care, Phil worked with Threshold – a housing supplier – to find Lena different accommodation.

In addition to Phil’s work, Audrey from Threshold and another member of the PBI team, had a key role to play in helping

Andy and Lena feel more settled in Holts. As well as supporting Phil in facilitating Lena and Andy’s move and issues with their old property, Audrey also focused on their more holistic needs. For example, Lena had said she wanted to make more friends and get to know people on the area, so Audrey arranged for her to help out at the local Salvation Army. Following the move, Audrey has continued to involve Lena in the community activities taking place in Holts, such as the Community Reporters’ programme and in a PBI mapping exercise. Audrey feels that this type of informal support has made Lena feel like she wants to “give something back into the community” and she is now “very proactive”.



**To listen to
Audrey's
story click or
scan here**



Key Learning Points

From Lena and Andy’s accounts of their situations we can see how housing issues that some would consider to be relatively small, can considerably impact

on people's overall wellbeing if left unresolved and where the people involved have other challenges in their lives. The fact that Andy and Lena weren't being listened to and weren't seeing any progress in their situation led them to disconnect with the area, however, once the issue had been resolved by a house move, both are now more connected to where they live and this in turn has impacted positively on their wellbeing. As Lena states, she now wants to give something to the community and is more positive about the area.

The role of the PBI in this is two-fold. Firstly, at a practical level, Phil's

ability to navigate and challenge 'the system' meant that action was taken to rectify to situation. This is something that many cannot achieve on their own due to lack of knowledge of or status within systems. Secondly, at a more holistic level, Audrey recognised that resolving the damp and housing issue would only fix one set of problems. Her skills in connecting Lena and Andy to initiatives in the area that were relevant to them meant that both now feel much more at home in Holts. In essence, a mixture of practical support and holistic understanding of Lena's and Andy's situations was how the PBI team facilitated the family to improve their wellbeing and home-life situation.



WORKING WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

The value of activities and provision outside of formal education



A number of the stories gathered from communities across Greater Manchester have highlighted the value of providing activities for children and young people outside of school hours. This summative report looks at two types of provision – Holiday Play Activities and a Homework Club – that are being run in Holts and Lees, and Lower Falinge respectively.

Play matters

The placed-based integration (PBI) team in Holts have been running play activities

for children in the school holidays that revolve around arts and crafts tasks and the opportunity to play different sports. The value of these activities to the children and the community is multifaceted. An aspect of this value, is that they provide opportunities for children living on the estate to get together and make friends. As one child explains, “it’s nice to have friends around”. This sentiment is echoed by parents on the estate who describe how the activities give their children opportunities to “do stuff with other kids” and provide a chance for them to make “friendships and bond”. More so, one

parent who has recently moved onto the estate describes how the activities help her daughter to be “more settled” in school and provide opportunities for her to work on and “enjoy team activities”.

"Lots of kids running riot on the estate...there's nothing for them to do."

Parent

Parents and children also value the activities as they help to alleviate boredom and reduce anti-social behaviour on the estate. As one parent describes, the activities gives the children “something to do on the holiday rather than hanging around on the street”, and another states that there are “lots of kids running riot on the estate...its hard bringing kids up on a council estate where there is no money... there’s nothing for them to do”. The children have very similar perceptions, with one child saying that the activities “keep us nice and calm in the holidays” and another stating that they give them “good things to do rather than being stuck in all the time”. Therefore, as the stories suggest, the activities don’t just provide a fun activity to do, but all contribute to the

children’s overall wellbeing through getting them out of their homes and providing a chance for them to socialise with other young people.

To listen to the children's thoughts click or scan here



Supporting children’s ongoing development

Although the activities offered on Holts and Lees estates by the PBI team involve play, there is also an educational value to them. As one parent acknowledges, the arts and crafts activities that her children participated in allowed them to “use their skills” and develop their “fine motor skills”. Echoing this, another parent who is also a teacher, states that the activities have an educational value for the children.

In Lower Falinge, the Tenants and Residents Association runs a homework club one evening per week. As Andy describes, this club is a key part of the community spirit in the area and was born out of listening to the children’s

needs about their education. Essentially, the children needed a space to do their homework and also some support with it. The homework club therefore provides the children with “supervised internet access, printing, some ideas what to do, how to start [their homework]” but as Andy states, “we don’t do the homework for them”. One of the homework club’s volunteers, Marie, emphasises its value to the children and young people who attend it when she states that they “don’t have anywhere to go” to get support with their education outside of school. For Marie, the homework club fills this gap in support, suggesting that in some cases that the attendees “mothers and fathers can’t help them, so we are here”. Part of the success of the homework club for Andy is that children repeatedly engage with it and therefore see the benefit of it in their lives. Similarly, Susanne has measured the success of the play activities offered in holidays in Holts and Lees by the fact that the same children repeatedly engage with them.

The volunteer-run provision in Lower Falinge is a response to a community’s needs and exemplifies again that when people are motivated, enabled and provided with the necessary resources (i.e. a space to deliver the activity) that self-led community activities can emerge and sustain. Another example of this is the community groups that are now

sustaining themselves at the UCAN centre in Halliwell through Shaheen and the Centre’s support.

**To listen to
Andy's
story click or
scan here**



Conclusion: The impact on the wider community

Additionally, some of the stories gathered highlight other, more unexpected benefits of providing activities and provision for children and young people outside of school. For example, as one of the parents states, the Summer play activities happening in the Holts neighbourhood have a great “community spirit” and another parent who has recently moved to the area states how she has “really enjoyed it”, not just her child. These types of family activities then, not only provide productive and enjoyable tasks for the

"Everyone tries to jump on the bandwagon and get everyone in."

Parent

children to participate in, but also provide a space for adult members of the community to get together and meet new people in a friendly environment.

In Lower Falinge, the homework club run by the Tenants and Residents Association not only benefits the children who access it, but also the adults who volunteer as part of it. As Marie explains, helping out at the homework club is part of her feeling more independent and is supporting her journey to becoming more assertive. Therefore, the impact of the types of activities outlined in this report, goes beyond the children themselves and

into the wider community by engaging people in volunteering and skills development opportunities and contributing to the sense of community spirit in the area by bringing people together and supporting the areas to tackle anti-social behaviour.

To listen to parents talking about the value of play activities click or scan here



CONCLUSION

Key Insights



Within the summative reports contained in this report, a range of multifaceted findings have emerged. This concluding section looks at the transversal ideas that cut across the different reports and stories of lived experience from the neighbourhoods where the place-based integration (PBI) teams are working, presenting them as a set of key insights.

Pride in our places

Despite the fact that some residents have identified that their area is surrounded by a certain 'stigma' or

has a negative 'reputation', many of the stories gathered suggest that people are proud of where they live. This was particularly strong in the stories from Rochdale. As Andy simply states, "Lower Falinge is a brilliant place", and as Kedria phrases it, "[Lower Falinge] is beautiful to me". Talking about the socio-economic make-up of the estate, Andy states that "just because we live in social housing doesn't mean we have to live in squalor". This view is echoed by other residents of the area, as Marie points out, "you can see in Lower Falinge in people's gardens that they've done

their own designs, they've planted their own plants". Although the estate has been consistently referenced as a "most deprived area" by the media and other sources, for Andy and other residents, this label is not justified. As he suggests, with recent and forthcoming regeneration, the "estate is changing, we underwent some new house building... and we've seen what that change has made." For him, such changes have made the estate "better" for "future generations".

This pride of place is also echoed in stories from other areas. In Samim's story about living in different areas of Bolton, a strong sense that she is genuinely happy to live in the town is portrayed as she chooses words such as "fantastic" to describe it. Similarly, Derek's story about his life on Holts and various people's reflections of the estate in the past and present overview film do contain sentiments of pride in terms of the community spirit of the area and the friendships they've made there. Furthermore, as Lena and Andy's story about an housing issue on the Holts estate demonstrates, when people are happy with the physical aspects of their environment it enables them to feel more settled on an

emotional level, which in turn supports their overall wellbeing.

"Just because we live in social housing doesn't mean we have to live in squalor."

Andy

Yet although the negative labels are being actively rebuked in Lower Falinge, in other areas these labels seem to have a more negative impact on the psyche of the people living there. Despite the positive elements of the stories mentioned, this seems to be quite prevalent in Holts, with the negative perceptions of the area in terms of economic deprivation and crime impacting on how people talk about it. For example, a mother from the area when talking about activities on the estate for children consciously references the "lack of funding" in area and relates this directly to the children having nothing to do. Similarly, Mason's story indicates a fear of crime due to lack of lighting in certain areas as opposed to an actual experience of crime by himself or his friends. What this suggests is that the reputations commonly assumed about places that focus on their deficits are harmful to people's own understanding

of where they live and can contribute to self-perpetuating myths that certain areas are not good places to live. Yet when we listen to people's actual lived experience of neighbourhoods that are supposedly 'deprived' or 'disadvantaged', the narrative begins to be reframed. In essence, these lived experiences can be used to challenge perceptions of what certain communities are like and what it is like to live in certain neighbourhoods.

From reliance to resilience

The ethos of supporting people and communities to do things for themselves and be more self-sustaining is part of the PBI working practices and ethos. This understanding comes through strongly in the stories of lived experience encapsulated in the 'Working Together' summative report. Yet it is not just the reforms related to PBI that advocate for this, a number of stories gathered demonstrate that people themselves are keen to be less reliant on formal or public sector provision and more resilient at handling challenges in life for themselves.

In Linda's story about the knit and natter group, for example, she details how for her attending the sessions is more

about nattering than the knitting. From this story we gather that a community-led group/activity plays an integral role supporting Linda's overall wellbeing by providing her a space in which she can connect with other people. In essence, the key aspect of the activity for Linda is the social connections it provides. This sentiment that is seconded by Shaheen from the Halliwell, Bolton PBI team who helped to establish the group to address issues around social exclusion in older people.

Similarly, Marie's story about her efforts to overcome her assertiveness issues, outlines how formal support is only part of the answer. As well as accessing support via the integrated delivery of public sector services, Marie has also been supported to access more community-led initiatives such as volunteering at the homework club for children in Lower Falinge. Accessing activities such as these and actively contributing to her neighbourhood keeps her busy, and as Marie states, this supports her overall mental health. Both these stories demonstrate how by creating spaces and activities in which people can get together to support one another, there maybe scope for lessening the need or reliance on more formal support provision.

Navigating systems

Yet despite the push towards resilience and people seemingly valuing their independence and ability to steer their own lives, there is a clear sense from within some of the stories in this report that people are experiencing issues when navigating the systems that they need to in order to get support. This issue is twofold. Firstly, people may not know where to go for the support that they need, and secondly, even if people do know where to get support, the system in place for them to access it may be difficult (and in some cases obstructive) for them to navigate independently. As is apparent with Lena and Andy's stories, a lack of knowledge of where to go for support or what to do was not the issue. Instead, as Phil – a member of the PBI team working Holts and Lees in Oldham – describes, the issue was about a blockage in the system that he could unblock because of his specialist knowledge of housing and his PBI team status.

Looking at the issue of how people can be supported to navigate systems, some potential solutions have emerged from the stories gathered. Firstly in terms of connecting people to the right support

or introducing them to navigating a system, there is a role being played by intermediaries such as Andy from the Lower Falinge Tenants and Residents Association, who connect people in communities to the right support. In essence, people like Andy signpost people in the right directions. Explaining how this could work for certain BAME and hard-to-reach communities, Oboh from Bolton Community Development Partnerships discusses how they are using faith leaders as a way of connecting to people who might have never accessed a service or support .

To listen to Oboh's story, click or scan here



Secondly, as Luci – a member of the Rochdale PBI team addresses – when signposting people to support we must also make sure they have the skills to navigate the system. For example, she asks the question “does somebody actually know what that process is?” and that we shouldn't take for granted that people have basic skills or things that we may think are basic skills and

knowledge. As Luci explains it is not sustainable for the teams to do things for people or to support them to access support once, what is important is that people retain the knowledge to be able to navigate the different systems and services independently.

However, whilst this approach is useful for supporting people to access services independently, what this does not address is the issue that Lena and Andy encountered in Holts in which a blockage in the system was causing the issue. Situations like these require a person with status within the system or service – such as PBI workers like Phil – in order to overcome a blockage or to escalate the issue further through relevant channels. Therefore, the challenge as to how we can create truly

resilient and self-sustaining communities is largely wrapped up in the bigger issue of how do we implement service provision that listens to the needs of the people they serve and contains systems within them that individuals – regardless of status or expertise – can fully navigate for themselves.

Find all the stories in this report and more from Greater Manchester by clicking or scanning here





For further information on Community Reporting and the Institute of Community Reporters contact:

E: gary@peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk / enquiries@peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk
T: 0161 743 3537

